Conversion of LoC into a soft border

405. SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Pak-President during his recent visit proposed converting the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir into a soft border without committing to accept it as a long term, permanent border solution to the Kashmir problem; and

(b) if so, the offer made and its implications towards a solution of the Kashmir issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No.

(b) Does not arise.

Indo-US Relations

406. SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether during his recent visit to the US, President George Bush had made a strong personal commitment to build on US-India relations and to take them to a much higher level, over the next four years of his term;

(b) if so, the precise offer made and its implications; and

(c) the steps taken and being taken in the light thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) External Affairs Minister visited Washington DC at the invitation of US Secretary of State from 12-14 April, 2005 and met President Bush on April 14 in the Oval Office of the US President. President Bush said that he was going to use the next four years of his second term to further strengthen US-India relations to take them to a much higher level. He spoke about India as a global power with whom US wanted to work very closely for global peace. He also said that India and the US needed to work together in the area of energy. President Bush conveyed that he was very much looking

forward to receiving Prime Minister and that a very warm welcome awaited Prime Minister.

(c) In order to strengthen India-US cooperation, both Governments have agreed on steps such as the setting up of a Strategic Dialogue to be headed by External Affairs Minister and Secretary of State; an Energy Dialogue headed by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission on the Indian side and by Energy Secretary on the US side; and a Joint Working Group on Space with State Department on the US side and Department of Space on the Indian side in the lead. On Defence cooperation, Raksha Mantri's visit to the US from June 28-30, 2005 led to greater understanding of each other's concerns and strategic interests. India and the US signed a New Framework for the Defence Relationship. Significant progress has been achieved during Prime Minister's visit to the US from July 18-30, 2005 when Prime Minister and President Bush declared their resolve to transform the relationship and establish a global partnership between the two countries.

Visit of foreign delegation to Indian nuclear sites

407. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that for the first time a foreign delegation had been allowed full access to Indian nuclear sites;

(b) whether the foreign delegation had also visited the military nuclear installations; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) A US delegation had visited India in February 2005 as a part of ongoing India-US cooperation in the field of nuclear safety. The delegation was shown some civilian nuclear facilities.

(b) No.

(c) Does not arise.